



V. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/PROJECT COORDINATION

To ensure that the community has had ample opportunity to provide comments and be involved in the development and evaluation of alternatives, this study has included an extensive public involvement process with public meetings, question and answer sessions, newspaper advertisements, and a project web site.

The public involvement activities for the SR 101L to New River Road improvements were performed concurrently with future improvements planned to I-17 north of New River Road to Black Canyon City. For clarity, only those issues pertinent to the SR 101L to New River Road study are discussed in this document.

A. Scoping

The purpose of the scoping process is to identify potential issues, concerns, and opportunities (ICOs) to be considered in the Design Concept Study and the DEA for the proposed improvements. This scoping ICO information was obtained from area residents, business owners, and government agency representatives through public and agency scoping meetings. The scoping process for this project is summarized in the project scoping report (ADOT 2000b).

1. Agency Scoping

An agency scoping meeting was held on January 6, 2000, at 10 a.m. at the ADOT Engineering Building in Phoenix. The agency scoping meeting was attended by representatives of BLM, FHWA, ASLD, ADOT Phoenix Construction District, ADOT Regional Traffic, MCDOT, Maricopa County Planning Department, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, City of Phoenix Planning, City of Phoenix Police Department, Deer Valley Unified School District, and three utility companies (AT&T, U.S. West, and Southwest Gas). Numerous ICOs were discussed during the meeting, but those most emphasized were accommodating future TIs, emergency vehicle access, frontage roads, rapidly growing congestion, timing of environmental studies, protection of natural and cultural resources, utility impacts and relocations, and roadway safety. Agency correspondence through the course of this study is included in Appendix H.

2. Public Scoping

A public scoping meeting was held on January 6, 2000, at 5:30 p.m. at the New River Elementary School cafeteria in New River. Fifty-five people signed in at the meeting. Numerous ICOs were discussed, but the most commonly raised included future TI and frontage road improvements, development and population growth in the area, growing traffic congestion, the need for developer restrictions and fees, and the need for immediate traffic relief.

Fourteen written comments were received regarding the need for immediate improvements to provide traffic relief. Other comments included whether additional lanes would be required in the future, the need to reserve room for future expansion, and a preference expressed for outside widening over inside widening. Several oral and written comments were received from property owners expressing concern over potential impacts to their property and/or identifying their current and proposed property use.



The safe flow of traffic was a major concern of both the public agencies and the general public. The opinions expressed indicated a strong desire for roadway improvements, especially from Phoenix to Anthem Way. Design ICOs identified through the scoping process included frontage roads, TIs, the highway widening limits, utilities, development, and transportation management, including the following:

- Provision of continuous frontage roads to Carefree Highway
- Cost of bridge reconstruction
- Evaluation of overpass height, especially at New River Road
- Need for interim and ultimate improvements at Happy Valley Road and Pinnacle Peak Road TIs
- Need for new TIs at Carefree Highway, Dove Valley Road, Lone Mountain Road, Jomax Road, and Dixileta Road
- Bridge design accounting for high flows with appropriate scour protection
- Saving space for future expansion by building the new lanes to the outside of the present lanes
- Need for four lanes in each direction through the entire project area
- Designing so that a fourth lane could be provided with minimal additional widening in the future
- HOV lanes to New River Road
- Auxiliary lanes
- Posting signs warning of dropped lanes one mile in advance to provide adequate time to merge
- Potential impacts to a fiber optic cable adjacent to I-17
- Potential impacts to existing and planned gas lines
- Potential impact of build-out on SR 101L
- Incorporation of the Freeway Management System
- Lower speed limit to 65 mph instead of widening
- Concern that most accidents result from driver attitude and error, inappropriate vehicles hauling trailers, and misuse of high beams
- Implementation of a faster, temporary solution
- Coordination with MCDOT on the frontage road study
- Providing for regional connectivity by including a corridor for future rail (light and heavy) as part of the study
- Creation of an interdisciplinary team between ADOT, BLM, FHWA, and MAG to act as an advisory committee and facilitate communication and consensus between agencies
- Consideration of potential locations for SR 303L in I-17 traffic modeling
- Concern that improved geometrics and additional lanes would exacerbate speeding



The urgent need for this project in response to rapid development in the area was the most frequently voiced community concern expressed at the meetings. Other concerns addressed schools, consideration of intermodal transportation, agency coordination, timing, access, emergency routes, traffic congestion, private property, and visual quality. Socioeconomic ICOs identified in the scoping process include:

- Desire to place new schools and a new Deer Valley School District Office in proximity to I-17 and SR 303L or other major roads
- Require developers to improve the infrastructure before developing the land and building homes
- Commercial development from New River Road to Anthem Way
- Rapid growth in the area
- Establishment of the USAA insurance company complex at Happy Valley Road increasing immediate project need
- Park-and-ride facilities
- Bicycle use of project area for commuting
- Need for a new east-west equestrian trail
- FHWA approval of TIs would be contingent on the development of a cohesive master plan for the area
- Coordination with North Valley Partnership and MAG
- Growing Smarter issues and various land use plans
- Approved planned community developments
- Increased burden on the infrastructure of the City of Phoenix
- Concern that the study process would take too long
- Immediate need for the project
- Expansion and congestion occurring faster than expected
- Project timeline being too slow for emergency service access to populated areas
- Improvements beyond Anthem Way unnecessary
- Project long overdue
- Opportunity to request funds from developers or other private entities to accelerate this process
- Not allowing freeway design and construction to lag behind explosive growth
- TI at Jomax Road would result in increased access and impacts to State Trust lands
- Access to ASLD lands along the I-17 corridor
- Increased need for patrols
- Concern about safety with regard to increased access to lands adjacent to the Ben Avery Shooting Range and Recreation Area
- Access to roads south of Carefree Highway
- Lack of alternative routes in case of emergency
- Traffic congestion
- Development in the North Valley relies on I-17 for ingress and egress
- Keeping expansion adjacent to private property within the existing highway R/W
- Private landowner plans are dependent on this and other projects



- Need to complete frontage roads from MP 222 to Carefree Highway to provide alternate access and detours in the case of emergencies, accidents, and highway closures, and to provide improved bicycle commuter access
- Construction of the Daisy Mountain Road TI would result in increased traffic in the surrounding neighborhood
- Provision of a decorative crash wall in the median
- Project cost
- Avoiding planned private developments

Generally, public response placed importance on human safety and convenience over potential environmental impacts of improving the roadway. Public comments regarding the environment were generally limited to the suggested treatment of the existing median. The following issues were identified by local jurisdictions and resource agencies:

- Identification, evaluation, and protection of cultural resources
- Provision of a landscape buffer in the median
- Avoiding tree removal
- Geologic instability and seismic activity
- Concern about engineering getting ahead of the environmental process – the environmental work must be to a sufficient level of detail to identify any constraints before any alternatives are eliminated
- Minimizing environmental impacts by widening to the inside
- Compliance with Section 404 of the U.S. Clean Water Act and obtaining a permit from COE
- Assessing and avoiding impacts to USFWS listed species
- Protection of riparian areas
- Protection of native plants and sensitive species

B. Information Meetings

1. Public Information Meeting No. 1

A public information meeting was held from 6 to 8 p.m. on April 10, 2001, at the Deer Valley Community Center in Phoenix. Notice of the meeting was provided in the *Arizona Republic*. The format of the meeting was an informal open house including exhibits for public viewing, a slide presentation, project information provided by the Study Team members, and a question and answer session. Study Team members were available before and after the meeting to answer questions.

The issues raised at the meeting included:

- Need for detours in the event of accidents on I-17
- Need for frontage road improvements prior to widening
- Other TI and highway improvements
- Timing of frontage road improvements
- Extension of frontage roads to New River Road
- Relationship to the Daisy Mountain Road TI



- Speed limit reductions
- Estimated costs and funding source
- Impacts to traffic south of the SR 101L TI
- Wildlife species

Twenty-two written comments were received after the public meeting. The issues raised included:

- Timing of R/W acquisitions
- Need for immediate frontage road improvements
- Leaving space in median for future rail service
- Need for TI between Carefree Highway and Happy Valley Road
- Need to accommodate bicycle use in design
- Minimizing visual impacts
- Extending frontage roads to New River Road to relieve traffic during construction
- Need for noise barriers
- Support for inside widening to reduce impacts
- Reducing impacts to the New River at the I-17 crossing

2. Public Information Meeting No. 2

A public information meeting was held from 6 to 8 p.m. on July 25, 2002, at the Deer Valley Community Center in Phoenix. Notice of the meeting was provided in the *Arizona Republic* and in the *Desert Advocate*. The meeting notice included a brief description of the study corridor, topics to be discussed at the meeting, contacts for more information, and how to comment on the study. Sixty-four people signed in at the meeting. The meeting was an informal open house with exhibits of the proposed improvements, a slide presentation, and a question and answer session. The presentation included descriptions of the analyses conducted to date for the project and the recommended improvement alternatives for mainline I-17, SR 101L TI, and frontage roads.

The issues raised at the meeting concerned:

- Noise barriers, their construction, and location
- Vibration caused by passing trucks
- Whether the traffic studies included historical accident data and speeding
- Need for ADOT to provide crossovers in the event of an accident
- Whether pavement surface affects noise studies
- Potential hazards posed by vehicles striking variable message signs
- Effects related to conversion of frontage roads to one-way operations
- Effects on scenic value and opportunities for landscaping
- Future TI improvements



Thirty-four written comments were received after the meeting. The largest number of comments received concerned noise impacts. Other comments received raised the following issues:

- Suggestions for TI improvements
- Whether the additional R/W takings would affect property values
- Providing an alternative route along the length of the project
- Concerns about accident-prone areas
- Minimizing visual intrusions
- Air quality
- Tree removal
- Need for immediate widening
- Frontage road improvements
- Need for continued coordination with the City of Phoenix

C. Hearing

A public hearing for the proposed project presented in this DEA is tentatively planned for late 2003. A summary of agency and public comments received following distribution of this DEA during the public hearing comment period, as well as ADOT responses, would be provided in the final environmental document.

D. Other Ongoing Activities

Public involvement has also been achieved during the course of the study through the use of a project web site offering study information and an additional means of providing feedback to the study team. The web site address is <http://i17wideningstudy.com>.



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